

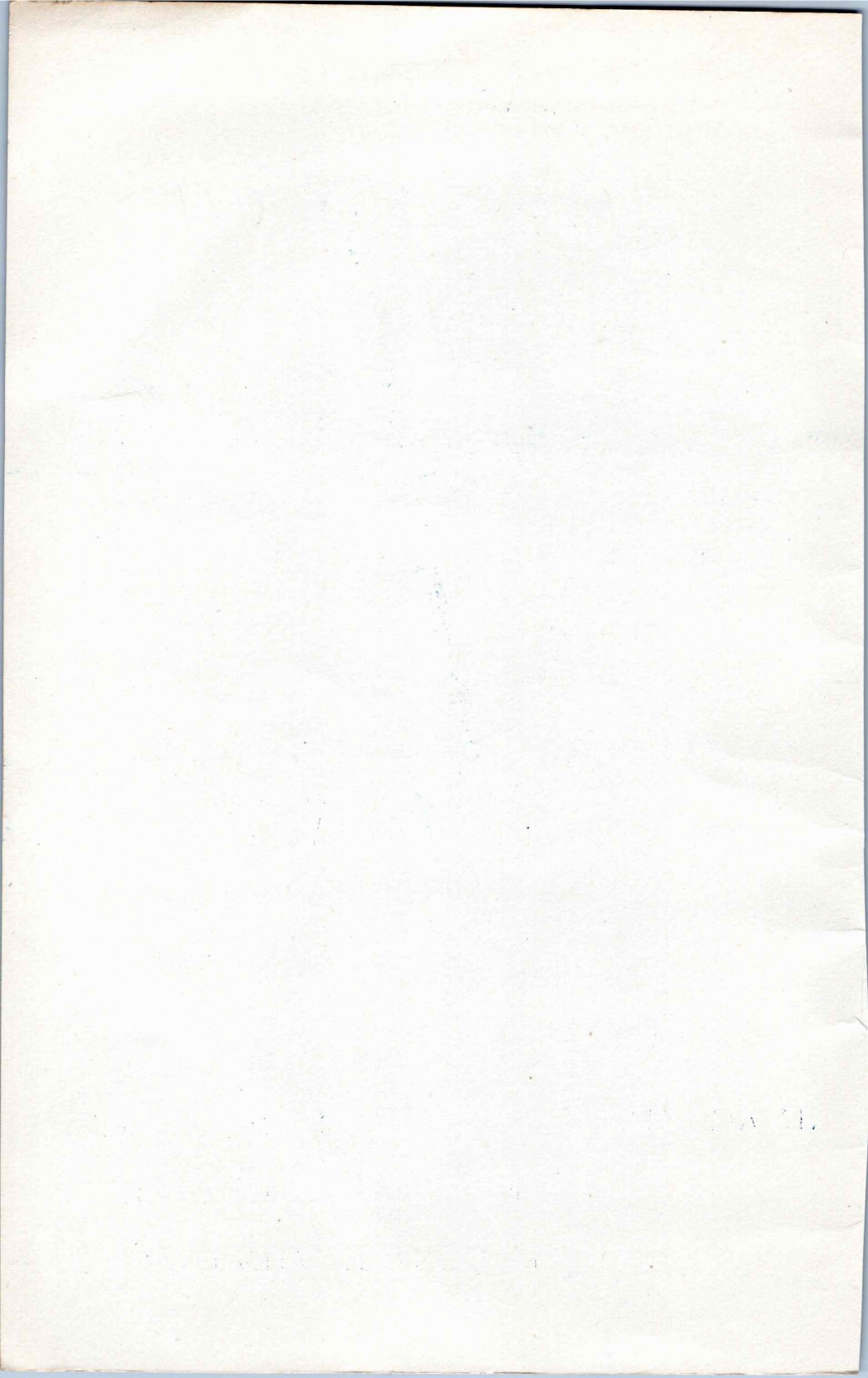
*Hayman*

# CHRISTCHURCH



## 1945

AN ACCOUNT OF THE CONFERENCE  
ON CHRISTIAN ORDER  
BY GORDON MIRAMS, M.A.



# "CHRISTCHURCH 1945"

AN ACCOUNT OF THE CONFERENCE  
ON CHRISTIAN ORDER

*By Gordon Mirams, M.A.*





## FOREWORD

This is not a full and detailed record of all that happened during the eight days between August 28 and September 4, 1945, when the Commission set up by the National Council of Churches held its Conference on Christian Order in Christchurch. Such a record is, in fact, being published in another form, and all that I have attempted to give here is a broad picture of what was done and said at that very important gathering, together with a summary of some of the decisions that were made. It has not been easy to do, and I have frequently been conscious of my inadequacy for the task. Indeed, if I have any qualifications at all they are that while I am very sympathetic towards all that the Conference stands for, I am also fairly detached, and therefore am probably not unrepresentative of the general public in this respect. At any rate, I have tried throughout this "popular" report to maintain an objective attitude and, when necessary, a critical one. I should perhaps add that, though I was commissioned to write this report, the opinions expressed in it are my own and not necessarily those of the National Council of Churches.

GORDON MIRAMS

Wellington, October 2, 1945.



# “CHRISTCHURCH, 1945”

## *THE CONFERENCE ASSEMBLES*

I suppose you might say that the Conference on Christian Order began on the ferry from Wellington and on the train carrying delegates from the south to Christchurch. Strictly speaking, of course, it had its beginnings much farther back than that; in the setting up of the National Council of Churches in New Zealand in 1941, and in the Campaign for Christian Order which the Council sponsored during 1942 and 1943, and which directly paved the way for this Conference in Christchurch. And back beyond that again were the Conferences at Oxford and Edinburgh in 1937 and all those other meetings of the Christian Churches which have marked the steady growth of the ecumenical movement this century.

But that is history, and the Conference in Christchurch was not nearly so much concerned with history as with the present and the future. That is why I say that the Conference really got started, unofficially of course, on the ferry and the train, because it was then that most of the 200 delegates, laity and clergy, from all parts of the country, had their first chance to get their bearings, to size up the situation and one another, and to start forming those friendships which took no account of denominational differences and which were soon to develop into a general spirit of fellowship that was, possibly, the greatest single achievement of the whole Conference. Even before the ferry pulled out from the wharf at Wellington, some enthusiasts were on the job of “lobbying” support for this resolution and that; while others, like schoolboys behind with their homework, took their preliminary reports to bed with them in a last-minute effort to digest their close-packed contents.

Those reports, though perhaps not exactly indigestible, were certainly not to be taken at one bite. Running into a hundred or more single-spaced, cyclostyled foolscap pages, they represented the hard work over a period of about two years of five main sub-commissions which were set up to study the application of the Christian message to such topics as industry, commerce, the land, education, Maori affairs, and world community and peace. And now this Conference of delegates from eight different denominations was meeting to consider those reports and pronounce upon them.

## UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Almost any one conference, I suppose, is much like almost any other, whether it is a conference of churchmen, of statesmen, of nurses, butchers, or undertakers. Everybody does a lot of talking; everybody feels that momentous decisions are being made which cannot help but change the course of history; and there is always, however fundamentally different the assembled viewpoints may be, a good deal of surface affability and comradeship. In these respects, "Christchurch 1945" was no different from other occasions on which men and women come together to air their opinions. But I don't think it is being sentimental to say that here the feeling went a great deal deeper than mere affability.

The Anglican bishop who said that for the first time in his life at this Conference he was unable to tell what Church a man belonged to merely by looking at him and talking to him, and who expressed delight because a delegate had asked whether he himself was a Baptist or a Presbyterian, was possibly exaggerating—but not by very much. There may have been, particularly at the outset, a natural tendency for fellow-members of a denomination to gravitate towards each other to form the little groups that conducted earnest "post-mortems" in the commonroom after each session; there may have been some friendly rivalry over the graces at meal-times, and perhaps over the meals themselves (at any rate, each denomination serving them was given its "credit-titles" on a notice-board in the dining-hall). And of course there were the usual jocular questions about the number of buttons on a bishop's garments asked by those who would never wear them, and similar inter-denominational pleasantries. These were things which a casual observer might conceivably have interpreted as signs of sectarianism. But he would have been wrong. As far as I was concerned—and I think as far as many others were concerned, too—I still don't know whether most of the people I talked with and walked with and ate with and slept alongside during those eight days were Congregationalists, Baptists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Quakers, or members of the Salvation Army or of the Associated Churches of Christ. And what is more, though it might be an over-statement to say that none of us cared, this was the least of our worries.

When one remembers how bitter were the prejudices, how rigid the exclusiveness, and how great the intolerance that once kept religious bodies apart, and seemed likely to keep them so for ever, this really was a remarkable achievement. It is true, of course, that in order to speak in unison some of the delegates occasionally had to lower their voices a little, with the result that the public may not always find it easy to catch what the Conference was trying to say. On certain issues the public may think that the Conference has not been



outspoken enough; some of the findings may seem too distantly or too tenuously related to economic and political facts. I am afraid there is some justification for this criticism, but I do not see exactly how it could have been avoided.

Again, by emphasising the spirit of fellowship and goodwill that prevailed, I hope I shall not give any reader the idea that the Churches have now sunk all their ancient differences and have become one happy family. The Conference made no sort of move towards organic union, towards the setting up of any kind of super-Church embracing all the non-Roman communions. That was right outside its order of reference. What it aimed at was not uniformity of creed or practice but simply consent on certain defined principles and aims. At the same time, there was clear recognition of the fact that the present division of Christ's Church into more denominations than there are nations on the earth is contrary to God's will and must with patience be overcome. Much has already been done. It is, after all, only 100 years since a Roman Catholic student at Oxford, desiring to gather together some fellow-students so that they might pray for the re-union of the Churches, was informed by his bishop, to whom the matter was referred, that there was "little value in prayer for an unattainable object"! If it did nothing else—and I think it may do much more—the Conference at Christchurch did at least give notice to the people of New Zealand that it does not regard this object as unattainable, and that the ecumenical movement is one of the great new facts of our time. And an encouraging fact, too, in an even wider sense; for if it is possible for religious bodies to work in unity like this for the common good, it is surely not a far-fetched hope that nations may eventually learn to do likewise.

## *BACK TO SCHOOL*

Christ's College, that famous secondary school whose architectural effect of harmony in diversity was paralleled by the Conference's own conglomerate structure, was the main setting for our activities, the school being empty of boys and masters for the term holidays. We slept in dormitories in the boarding-houses and slept warmly and well in spite of two or three examples of Christchurch's celebrated frosts. We used the college chapel for devotions each morning and evening and for the services which opened and closed the Conference, and I am sure we made just as joyful a noise unto the Lord as the boys of Christ's College have ever done. We used some of the classrooms for our section meetings and the building known as Big School for our main commonroom—the place where much of the real business of our gathering was transacted; where reports were redrafted, findings recast, and support canvassed for forthcoming resolutions. It is possible that the boys of Christ's College have sometimes worked as



hard at their lessons as many delegates did at these allotted tasks, but I doubt if they have ever worked in such comfortable surroundings. Indeed, if they were hovering about, the spirits of some of the more Spartan old boys whose names are carved around the walls must have been indignant to see the transformation worked for our comfort in Big School by carpets, easy chairs, standard lamps, writing desks, roaring fires and—even flowers on the tables. But we appreciated it. We appreciated also the chance to take our meals in the magnificent Memorial Dining Hall, and while I would hesitate to suggest that the boys of Christ's College have never fed so well therein, it is certain that they have never fed better.

The setting at Christ's College even gave one delegate a heaven-sent opportunity to refute the argument of another who had contended in a section meeting that there was complete equality in education in New Zealand. He did so by pointing out that it was impossible to talk like that so long as a rich farmer's son could be sent to this expensive college while a roadman's son in the country must make do with the Correspondence School! But whether it pleased the socialists because it supplied them with an argument against wealth and privilege; or whether it pleased the snobs, the sentimentalists, or those who were simply glad to be there to enjoy the beauty and dignity of the surroundings—whatever the reason, Christ's College was undoubtedly a perfect setting for the Conference, and much of the success of the whole gathering was due to the generosity of the Governors in making the place available to us.

The weather was kind to us, too: a not unimportant point, for the barometer can influence a conference almost as easily as the state of the delegates' digestions. Indeed, the local inhabitants might almost have regarded the week of nearly-perfect spring weather which favoured the Conference as an example of Divine intervention, for Christchurch (so we were assured) had only recently been undergoing the worst winter in its history.

When you are a pupil at Christ's College you do not walk on the grass of the quadrangle; that is, unless you are prepared to have a painful interview with a prefect. Perhaps the presence among us of one or two old boys was the reason why, at first, we almost all obeyed unconsciously this ancient rule of the school and kept to the paths—until an Australian delegate asserted his independence and challenged us to follow him. After that, nobody kept off the grass—either on the quadrangle or in the debates. The discussion most of the time was keen and vigorous, with no topics barred on the ground that they were too controversial—except that there did strike me as being a rather disappointing disinclination on the part of Conference to express itself on the subject of the atomic bomb. The topic did, in fact, crop up early in proceedings and came in for an occasional reference thereafter; but no formal pronouncement found its way into the minutes.

## THE "LANGUAGE DIFFICULTY"

As I have already emphasised, good fellowship and good humour were the keynotes of the Conference, but I am thankful to say that this did not mean that there was any of that dreadful back-slapping camaraderie and "heartiness" which, rightly or wrongly, is popularly supposed to distinguish the average Church gathering. Not that delegates went around with solemn faces and backs bowed with care. On the contrary, though there was very serious work on hand, our proceedings were constantly enlivened by bright incidents. I am thinking, for example, of the elderly woman (not a delegate!) who kept turning up at meal-time for the dual purpose of selling the Communist newspaper and of engaging in political argument. Bishops seemed to be marked down as her special prey: she would spot a purple patch from far off and make for it across all obstacles. She was particularly vehement in her denunciation of one bishop for having appeared on the same platform as a certain politician whom she described as "an enemy of the people." And then there was the Anglican dignitary who announced that he would vary grace by saying it in Latin. His thanks before meat were impressively rendered in that ancient tongue, but when he came to dismiss us after the meal he reverted to English—having forgotten the past tense of the Latin verbs! At least, that was the explanation, and why spoil the story by questioning it?

This was only one example of what might be described as the "language difficulty" that faced the Conference. On a much more serious level, there was a clear recognition by delegates that to be effective—that is, to be understood by the ordinary man—the Christian message must now be spoken in the language and idiom of the world today. I think it is not going too far to say that this became almost the theme-song of the Conference: it was heard in almost every report and in speech after speech. It was voiced in one way by the farmer who declared that the Church must somehow overcome its handicap "of tending to think in abstract theological terms and must try to escape from the influence of the university," and in another way by the churchman who declared that the Church "lacked the power to speak to the man in the street because it looked down on him and did not know his language." Nobody challenged the delegate who asserted that there was now a great body of people who did not understand, let alone accept, such a fundamental Christian concept as immortality, though churchmen took it for granted. But the speaker who probably carried most weight on this subject was Mr R. J. F. Boyer, chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, who, urging that the Churches must make more effective use of the radio, said that "every generation has its own idiom, and my son wants to hear the news of the Gospel in a different idiom from me."



There was no disagreement with these arguments. The Conference was as united on this problem of the "language difficulty" as it was on the related point (one, indeed, which it almost took for granted) that the Church has a right and an urgent duty to step outside the comparatively narrow limits of pure theology into the sphere of everyday affairs and express opinions on such topics as housing, wages, and domestic service.

It is, of course, easier for many churchmen to agree on the need to talk simply than it is for them to do it. They could not all be expected to overcome in one week the long-winded, abstract habits of centuries, and instead of saying that a man suffers the handicap of inequitable economic circumstances simply say that the fellow is short of cash. But at least they did try hard (as the person responsible for this "popular" report I must confess I did all I could to encourage them), and I believe that their desire to speak the language of the people should be welcomed by the people as one of the most worthwhile features of the whole Conference.

## *JOKES—AND VISITORS*

As was to be expected in a gathering largely composed of those whose task is to influence people from the platform and pulpit, the standard of debating at the Conference was high. There was even some genuine oratory. But this did not prevent a fine crop of colloquialisms and mixed metaphors. In one debate on economics we heard all about "the bird who delivers the milk"; we laughed when a sub-committee was suggested to "pick the eyes out of our brains" and we are still wondering what was meant by the speaker who referred to the "swarthy minds in the Education Section." We appreciated the Presbyterian parson who told us so picturesquely that "if we merely stand still wringing our hands we shall be barking up the wrong tree," and we applauded the wit who interjected that this was "an obvious case of wring-barking which would kill the tree." In brief, without becoming frivolous we enjoyed ourselves.

It is impossible in this report to write much about the individuals who attended the Conference; my space must be devoted to the decisions that were made rather than to the men who made them. But I must mention that we had some interesting overseas visitors: the Australian Bishop of Armidale (the Rt. Rev. J. S. Moyes), who was so concerned in his speeches about the threat of science and the machine to spirituality; the chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (Mr R. J. F. Boyer), who gave the Conference some particularly sound advice about religious broadcasting; the three American chaplains who took a keen interest in the Maori problem and who enlivened the final session with some



very bright farewell speeches; the Indian delegate, Dr. Surjit Singh, who was specially valuable as a member of the section dealing with Pacific affairs but whose terrific energy was apparent in all the debates and who more than held his own against the local theologians. And then there were, of course, several Maori delegates who made an invaluable contribution to the sessions dealing with their own race. Among our other visitors were the Prime Minister, who gave us an informal address, and the Hon. Walter Nash and Mr R. M. Algie, M.P., who spoke at the two public meetings in the Civic Theatre.

## *YOUTH STEPS OUT*

By no means all the delegates were clergy: they were, in fact, slightly outnumbered by the laity, women as well as men. Youth was well represented, too, and had a distinct contribution to make to the debates. (I shall not forget the young man, obviously fresh from school who, in a discussion on international affairs, dumbfounded his elders by quoting the Statute of Westminster verbatim!) Indeed, it was not long before Youth decided that it had a particular viewpoint to present and started what came to be known as the Revolt of the Under Twentynines. Why they chose that particular age nobody quite knew; but anyway I was permitted, as an observer, to duck under the age-bar and attend one of their special meetings. I can only comment that if all revolts were as mild as this we could all cheerfully become anarchists tomorrow. There were, it is true, one or two of the Under Twentynines who argued that young people were "far too complacent" about accepting the decisions of their elders; nevertheless my general impression was that the majority of the "rebels" agreed with the speaker who asserted that he had more faith in what his elders said than in anything they as a youth group might say, because "though they may be divided and contradictory, they know more than us." Be this as it may, one could certainly sympathise with the viewpoint of the young man who said that the fundamental problem facing Christian youth today was that they had to go out from school or Bible class into a world where the Christian Gospel was apparently treated as wholly irrelevant to the business of earning a living.

## *HOW THE CONFERENCE WORKED*

To handle its agenda, the Conference split itself into five separate sections, each of which considered one of the reports brought down by a sub-commission. After several meetings of the sections, these reports, as amended, were then presented at sessions of the full conference, open to the public, where they were discussed piecemeal and either adopted as

the findings of the Conference or—as happened in most cases—referred back to the sections for further redrafting. At one stage I contemplated making a statistical analysis of all the work that went into this Conference: in preparing for it and in carrying it through to completion. I got as far as estimating that just the preliminary work on the education report alone—before it even reached the section deputed to handle it, let alone the full Conference—amounted to more than 2000 man-hours! Not being any sort of mathematician (a fact of which I was reminded whenever I looked at the blackboards in the classrooms), I gave up the sum at this point, and can only suggest that the total man-hours put into “Christchurch 1945” would run into almost astronomical figures.

Nobody reading the final reports might appreciate that fact—especially the reports as they appeared in the daily papers at the time. The Conference did not, on the whole, receive a good press. The Christchurch papers handled fairly well the job of reporting proceedings—and it was a difficult job—but apparently the Press Association did not regard the Conference as live news, for not much went out to the rest of the country.

It was in the sections, and in the drafting sub-committees consisting of a few hard-working individuals, that much of the real spade-work of the Conference was done. And it was there that many of the most interesting and provocative debates took place. For it was there (especially in the Industry and Commerce Section) that delegates often had to get down to political issues. Yet I think it was very symptomatic of the general spirit of the Conference that politics seldom became party politics; so that, for example, one found a confessed supporter of the Labour Government charging the government with the fact that “maldistribution of wealth was almost as bad as ever before”; while on the other hand, one found in the same debate a representative of the opposite side wondering whether, from a Christian standpoint, there should be “any differences in rewards because of inherited opportunities and talents.”

But for a real test of the Christian spirit, I think one had to look to those persons responsible for the original reports who not merely suffered patiently but even co-operated actively while their brain-children, on which they had lavished so much time and loving care, were torn to bits, compressed, beheaded, squeezed, criticised, hacked about, rejected, despised, and generally mutilated by those who had had the reports in their hands for only a few hours. I have seen few sights more touching than the relief on the face of the writer of one long report on finding that one important word—almost the first—had been left untouched by a redrafting committee!



# THE REPORTS

The following pages contain summaries, very sharply condensed, of the reports and main findings that emerged from the conference. Where possible I have also indicated the lines along which the debates proceeded. The disproportionate amount of space given to some subjects as against others should not be taken as indicating their actual importance, but only their "news value" as I saw it. One point perhaps should be emphasised; these were the findings of the conference in Christchurch; they are not to be regarded as official pronouncements either by the National Council of Churches itself or by the individual Churches comprising the Council. They will, however, be placed before the various church authorities, and I think it is safe to say that they will carry considerable weight.

## *CHRISTIAN ORDER AND THE MAORI*

The first of the five section committees to complete its preliminary work and present a report to the full conference was that dealing with Christian Order in relation to the Maori race. This section also had the satisfaction of seeing its report adopted with much less alteration than any of the others—a result due partly to the intensiveness of the ground-work already done, but partly also to the fact that, from its very nature, this was a subject on which only those with some special knowledge or practical experience felt inclined to offer advice or criticism. I would not suggest that any attempt was made in this discussion to warn the general body of the conference to keep off the Maori grass; all the same, those who presented the report made it fairly plain—and rightly so—that delegates should walk warily, if only because the Maori community outside was keeping its ear very closely to the ground, and any statement from the conference would be most seriously studied in every Maori settlement throughout the country. Furthermore, as the Bishop of Aotearoa pointed out, in considering this report the conference was merely putting the finishing touches to something that had already been thought over, and talked and prayed over, by leaders of the Maori race up and down the country, in conjunction with pakeha friends.

The report took the form of questions and findings.

The first question dealt with the present awakened Maori race-consciousness, asking what it consists of, what has caused it, and what the Christian churches can do to guide and use it. Both in the finding and in the discussion on it, there was no argument that such awakened race-consciousness does, in fact, exist—and exist strongly. Though this trend has its roots in



the Young Maori Party of 40 years ago, the report stressed that it has been the war which has brought it right to the fore "through the unique opportunity for racial self-expression and leadership presented to the Maori Battalion under its own officers." Indeed, so much emphasis was placed by a succession of speakers on the exploits of the Maoris in war and their "gift for leadership," that an observer might perhaps have been excused for thinking that this repeated praise sometimes verged on the fulsome and might, in itself, have the effect of increasing unduly that racial self-consciousness which everyone was talking about! This, as I say, might have been an excusable reaction if, along with all the praise, there had not gone a clear recognition of the fact that, while the conference welcomed "the desire of the Maori for a continuity of the Maori leadership and self-expression which have been so distinctively developed in meeting the war situation," it was equally aware of the need to find "new constructive objectives" towards which the aroused vitality of the Maori could be directed in peace time. "The Christian Church," stated the finding, "should take responsibility for guiding the revived pride of race, so that it will be put in its right perspective." A vital point was made by the delegate who said that the war had given the Maoris the chance to reconstitute their old system of leadership, in the form of tribal committees democratically elected, and it was the continuation of that organisation which was now so necessary.

The next question in the report asked "what is to be the Christian objective for the destiny of Maori and pakeha in relation to each other in the common national life of New Zealand?" This was really the crucial question of the whole report because, in effect, it committed the conference to a declaration as to the ultimate destiny of the Maori race. Anthropological theory would suggest that that ultimate destiny is complete fusion with the numerically superior pakehas, but (as the report stated) this is much less certain than is sometimes asserted. "There is taking place to-day a parallel development of the two races, and the Maori population is increasing at approximately three times the percentage rate of the European population . . . New Zealand will have for many generations two races in varying proportions, living side by side, and approaching life from independent viewpoints. Each will have its contribution to make to the common life of the Dominion. One contribution from the Maori side would undoubtedly be a better sense of community. This conference affirms that while it is manifest that the Maori must take his part fully in the economic life of New Zealand and achieve European standards of living, he must continue rightly to have his racial identity honoured and safeguarded . . . We may yet develop a common unity—cultural, economic, and social—to which each race will have made its contribution."

There was very general assent to this statement, and the

one awkward question of the whole debate—whether delegates had seen evidence of enmity from pakehas towards Maoris—was soon disposed of with the assurance to the questioner that he “must have struck a bad patch.” Bishop Bennett probably voiced the sentiments of the whole conference—and certainly of his own people—when he said that while there was no thought of keeping the two races apart, it was certainly not the Christian goal to convert Maoris into pakehas. Nor did the conference misunderstand him when he added, “The pakeha is already common enough as it is!”

Dealing next with the question of what is the best setting—rural or urban—for achieving the Christian ideal for the Maori, the report contended that whereas city life is “unnatural for either Maori or pakeha, its disadvantages fall more heavily upon Maoris, who are essentially a rural people.” Disregarding the objection of one gregarious pakeha parson who argued that sweeping assertions about “the unnaturalness of city life for everybody,” were just part of a sentimental fad to glorify rural life, and who was going on to cite the Greek city states as a case in point, the conference adopted this finding which, among other things, drew attention to the fact that “at the present time there is insufficient arable Maori land to provide, on a very generous estimate, a living for more than a third of the Maori people.” The result was that many had taken up city life, which in turn gave rise to problems of housing and many temptations. While urging the Government to provide, in cities and large towns, groups of rental houses for Maoris, with Maori community centres and a measure of community organisation, the conference was of the opinion that the interests of the Maori could best be served by “the establishment of rural industries particularly suited to him, giving scope for his manual skill and artistic ability.”

Coming to the question of religious organisation, the conference was of the opinion that, while the ideal of a single, united Maori Christian Church appealed to many people, the fact that Maoris were living in such close association with pakehas made such an objective impracticable. At the same time, the historical reasons for denominationalism among Europeans did not mean much to Maoris; and so the Church, in her mission to them, had an imperative need to achieve as much co-operation and fellowship as possible between her various branches.

Following this, the conference recommended to the National Council of Churches that the Maori sections of such Churches as are affiliated with it should be formed into a Maori section of the Council. This recommendation met some opposition, on the ground that it might mean splitting the National Council of Churches into two camps; but the general feeling was that there was no possibility of conflict, since all that was envisaged was a Maori sub-section of the main council, with pakehas not excluded.



The attitude of the Conference towards social security in relation to the Maori people was probably pretty well summed up by the Maori delegate who said: "It is much too late now to talk of withdrawing social security from the Maoris—if you did you'd have a repetition of the old wars between Maori and pakeha! In spite of some abuses, nearly all of which apply equally to pakehas, we have benefited immeasurably. But wherever abuses do seem to exist thorough inquiries should be made." To this end the report recommended that the services of the tribal committees, which had so signally proved their worth in organising the Maori war effort, should now be utilised to investigate complaints lodged by social security officers and to deal with abuses when found.

Three important "practical steps" in the sphere of education were recommended to be taken: (1) The establishment of a chair in Polynesian Ethnology in one of the colleges of the New Zealand University, and the thorough training in Maori language, history, and culture of a group of chosen student teachers, pakeha and Maori, in the Teachers' Training Colleges, this to be the beginning of a national policy to bring qualified instruction in these subjects into the whole of our educational system. (2) That, as a measure of immediate improvement, Maori culture should be made a compulsory section of the "social studies" in primary and secondary schools from Form I onwards. (3) That the Adult Education Movement should be extended to the Maori race.

The final portion of the Maori report dealt with the "liquor question." It was made clear that, although a section of the Maori people had urged that the principle of racial equality should be recognised by the removal of protective legislation which they felt involved racial discrimination, nevertheless there had been strong opposition from another large section—"a surprisingly large section," said Bishop Bennett—to any relaxing of the law against serving drink to Maoris. This view was supported by a young Maori delegate who contended that, on this subject anyway, many Maoris had changed their minds. "If something really worth while were involved, we would hold out for it, but we are not prepared to fight for equality on the liquor question," he said. Summarised, the findings of the conference declared that "the dangers emanating from the sale of intoxicating liquor still remain the greatest stumbling block of the Maori race," and therefore, "while expressing our full sympathy with the Maori claim for equality of status, we cannot recommend the withdrawal of the present safeguards."

## *THE EVANGEL*

The "Report on Christian Order and New Zealand in relation to the Evangel," which followed the sessions on the Maori race and which was presented by the Rev J. M. Bates, was in



many ways the most fundamentally important of all the subjects to come before the Conference—and at the same time the most complex and the most difficult to understand and appreciate by the ordinary person who is untrained in theology. The “language difficulty” to which I have referred was here at its greatest, and those responsible for drafting the report were as conscious of the difficulty as anybody.

The report attempts an analysis of the situation in which the world, and particularly New Zealand, finds itself to-day, and asks the question: “Where is the mass-civilisation of our day to find its faith?” The mechanisation of modern life has resulted in the development of what has been called the “mass man” in political and social affairs. Men cease to be individuals and become more like peas in a pod, instead of being the persons God intended them to be. The changes which have come over the modern world are, in themselves, not necessarily opposed to Christianity (continues the report) but in order meanwhile to preserve the unity and coherence of their communities, governments are searching for an ideal or dynamic which can command the loyalty of their people. Christianity **could** be this dynamic, but where it has ceased to be the ruling faith men are looking for something else.

Christianity maintains that, however much the pattern of human society may change, human nature remains the same spiritually needy thing it was before; and its sin does not, in fact, become eliminated by mere adjustments of outward conditions. Though mass-organisation may lessen some of the injustices arising from the industrial revolution, which sacrificed the individual to the economic process, the sin of man has brought a new threat to spiritual freedom; the individual now lies in danger of being subordinated to the State and to the economic order. In contrast to this, Christianity sees only one main purpose in history and in all social development: that is, “to build a spiritual society, founded in faith, and built up in charity.” The Church believes that any order of society which does not provide scope for the spiritual powers latent in humanity must lead to futility and, at last, to disaster.

In New Zealand, as elsewhere, religion has gradually become restricted to man’s inner life; his social and economic activities have grown steadily more secularised. But this attempt to find satisfaction through life organised on a purely secular basis has instead brought widespread dissatisfaction and “sickness of the soul.” New Zealand, with its high standards of living and comfort, has been particularly susceptible to the materialistic outlook. “With many people, good material conditions and physical security, **without purpose**, have been their undoing,” states the report. “. . . Christians in this country face a situation in which most people are ignorant of the teaching of the Faith, and many consider that it has been left behind by a new and scientific age . . . While respect for the institution of the Church is still something to be reckoned

with in New Zealand, it tends to be respect for something traditional which does not seem vital to everyday existence; and large and virile elements of the population ignore or despise it accordingly."

The Church, therefore, must strip herself of all false optimism and face realities. "We are back in a situation more closely resembling the New Testament than for many centuries . . . We turn then with renewed expectancy to the Bible as being most relevant to a world which has lost confidence in itself, and relevant to a Church which knows herself to be a minority, despised and rejected, but confident of her divine commission to proclaim the Christian Evangel."

After discussing the substance of the Evangel, this section of the report ends by declaring that in every department of our national life there is the need for Christian witness within our social groupings—in education, in family life, in economics, in agriculture, and so on. The Church is called upon to make clear by every means in its power what is the Christian "technique" in all these walks of life.

In the next section, the report on the Evangel discusses measures by which the Christian message may be presented in such a way as to penetrate the general indifference of the community and overcome suspicion where it exists. It declares the need for better preaching by clergy and ministers ("Preaching . . . frequently takes too much for granted in the knowledge and background of listeners; for example, the knowledge of the Bible upon which a preacher can count is much more scanty to-day than it was a generation ago"); the need for a vital congregational life, more freedom for pastoral work, and more personal contacts ("The charge of unfriendliness is all too often levelled against professing Christians"); and for the cell type of activity whereby small groups of Christians in a particular organisation or institution try to spread the faith among their fellow members, with whom they already have something in common.

After dealing with the need for enthusiastic and intelligent evangelism of youth through the media of the home, the Sunday School, the Bible Class movement, and so on—with corresponding changes in technique to meet the conditions of to-day—the report concludes by urging that bold experiments should be made in using the radio, the press, and the film.

As was to be expected, a great deal of the discussion on this report centered round the final section dealing with practical methods of presenting the Gospel, particularly over the air. There was, however, enthusiastic support for the American chaplain who, drawing on military terminology, suggested that delegates, before estimating the situation, before listing their resources and setting down their strategy, ought to make a statement of the actual job in hand. And that, he said, was to be found in their positive conviction that the Gospel was



able to transform the world and the motives by which men lived. This opinion had considerable influence on deciding the conference to refer back for redrafting a series of affirmations on the Evangel, on the ground that as they stood they were "just repeating the old familiar theological terms" and would not be understood by the man in the street. As finally accepted, these affirmations read as follows:

## AFFIRMATIONS

*The Conference affirms that its greatest objective is a Christian New Zealand. It believes that Christian Order in our lives, our relationships, and our institutions depends on these being subject to the living Rule of God as Jesus Christ taught and embodied it. It believes that the unwillingness of men to submit to this Rule is the root cause of disordered lives and social problems.*

*It believes that this unwillingness must first be overcome before the social order can be Christianised and men can be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.*

*It believes that the focus and instrument of God's Rule is His Church which is charged with the message and work of reconciliation.*

*It looks forward to the time when the Church through its prayer and work will realise on earth the unity which God intends and so be able to preach, without incongruity, the Gospel of reconciliation.*

*The Conference believes that the special message of the Church to an age in which civilisation is threatened by terrifying powers of destruction if willed by evil men, consists in the confident assertion that the power of God the Holy Spirit, through the lives of men and women devoted to Him, can overthrow and reverse the powers of evil and establish an order in which civilisation is secure.*

*Above all, it affirms its undying faith in the ultimate triumph of Christ and His Church.*

## EDUCATION

As originally drafted, the report of the Commission on Education occupied a total of nearly 50 single-spaced foolscap pages and was quite plainly the product of an enormous amount of work and thought. It aroused some of the keenest debating of the conference, in section meetings as well as in plenary sessions, much of the argument centering round the definition of the word "education" itself. There were those who regarded education as the whole process by which a nation develops and transmits its heritage to the coming generation, and those on the other hand who regarded it in the

much narrower sense of being merely "schooling." Even in the closing minutes of the conference one heard echoes of this controversy.

Originally the report opened with a lengthy and detailed discussion on the nature and purpose of education from a philosophical and theological viewpoint, but when it came before the plenary session this had been condensed into what one of the delegates described as a kind of "Moffatt version"; still carefully and accurately theological, but popular. It affirmed that Christian education should give the maximum opportunity for the free development of the individual along the lines of his own special bent, while at the same time endeavouring to ensure that the contribution of the individual would be in the best interests of society. Vocational guidance should have an important part to play in this direction. The report continued: "The Christian faith implies neither a particular theory of education nor yet a particular technique, though it has much to say regarding both. It is a personal relationship implying a body of truth, and this is a pervasive influence working upon both the educator and those he seeks to educate, enabling them to keep a steady course amid the conflicting forces and ideas that surround them, and in all circumstances to act in the light of the will of God revealed in Jesus Christ."

The functions of education, the report went on, were two-fold; to conserve and to develop. It might well be doubted whether the power of education was as absolute as often claimed; nevertheless the achievements of the totalitarian States did suggest what possibilities there might be in wise and thorough instruction in the ideals of freedom and truth. Yet freedom could never be taught under compulsion, and whatever else a phrase like "direction of studies" might mean, the educationist must always be on guard against methods and procedure likely to crush and warp the mind of his pupil.

Regarding autonomy in education, the report stated that while both Church and State had a legitimate interest in education, true education demanded freedom to conduct its affairs in its own way. At the same time, there was need to guard against the danger of bureaucratic control; the danger that education might be conducted in the interests of the teaching profession and, in particular, of the educational hierarchy. ("Education is the concern of the people, the community, the nation, and not merely the concern of the teaching profession.") In another place the report stated that the Church must adjust itself to the fact that its view of life was not shared by all members of the community. "No claim to exercise authority or control over those who do not share our basic convictions could rightly be made by the Church, nor would it be likely to be granted." The conference also affirmed the view that since education is the responsibility of the community, it should to a large extent be free to develop



within a national system upon an autonomous basis; that the chief function of the State in education is to maintain standards and equalise opportunities; and that there should be the greatest possible amount of local initiative and local control.

After declaring that the work of teachers was impeded and frustrated by the serious social evils resulting from the view that the problems of man could be solved on a materialistic basis, and by the widespread lack of any faith to give purpose to life, the conference expressed gratification at the growing understanding between the Churches, the teachers, and the education authorities on the question of religious education in the public schools. The National Council of Churches was asked to consider the question of recommending the inclusion of Scripture as an optional subject for the School Certificate.

In presenting this report, Principal A. L. Haddon said that the task confronting them was to ensure that the Church and the home played a full and adequate part in education, for if the community failed to transmit the Christian part of its heritage to coming generations, its failure would have most dire effects.

The view that the Church must not hand over education entirely to the State, but must regard it as a co-operative enterprise, was expressed by the seconder of the report (Dr J. D. Salmond). He said that the development of the secular tradition in New Zealand education had been more or less inevitable. Apart from the growth of rationalism, it had been caused by the divisions in the Churches themselves. If there had been a National Council of Churches at the time, he doubted if the secular clause would have got into the Education Bill of 1877. But the teaching profession were as Christian in their attitudes and outlook as any part of the community—probably more so—and he urged the conference to follow the line of understanding and co-operating with them.

Another important contribution to the debate was made by the speaker who said that culture must not be controlled too much; and the Church, which had once tried to do that very thing, was perhaps the best body now to affirm the principle that culture must be free and spontaneous. "We don't want the Church on top, trying to dictate to other sections of the community; we want the Church to be alongside them, helping the community and working with it," he said. "Above all, we must remove the fear of dictation from the teacher's mind. They have had some reason to be afraid of the Church in the past, and they have had to fight for academic freedom. But in the future it may well be the Church that will stand up for freedom for the teachers if they are threatened by other groups. Once we say that to the teachers, and mean it, we can work alongside them: I have found that many are sur-

prised and delighted as soon as they find this attitude in churchmen. They are then perfectly ready to discuss this question of religious education. But the real answer to this problem lies in the spiritual state of the whole community: if the people really want religion in education, we'll get it; if not, we won't."

## INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

There may still be some people in agreement with the New Zealand professor who once said, "It is a waste of time, and even dangerous, for the Church to try to interfere with the laws of economics"—but apparently no such people were attending this conference. At any rate, though there were some differences of opinion, fairly slight ones, as to exactly what phrases should be used, nobody denied that the conference had the right to speak its mind on the subject of Christian Order in relation to Industry, Commerce, and the Land. And there was unanimous agreement also that whatever it said the conference should say it plainly and tersely, without (as one delegate put it) "the sesquipedalian terminology and broad platitudinous postulates of theological dissertations." Well, that was a fine ideal, and if they did not completely achieve it they came closer to doing so in the report on Industry, Commerce, and the Land than in any of the others. The Industry and Commerce section began, for example, by a simple statement of its purpose, which was: "To offer a set of principles that should be manifest in any economic order; to declare that without such principles the economic order will remain full of unresolved conflicts which are the seeds of its own decay; to look at New Zealand in the light of these principles; and to say what man should do about it."

Now, whether the report does, in fact, say clearly what man should do about it may be open to question. I must confess that, on first reading it, I had the same sort of sinking feeling as the mover of the report (Mr E. H. Langford) declared he had experienced—the feeling that the Church "was again going to play safe, as it had so often done, on these vital issues." On the one hand, the report certainly does not give approval to any specific mechanisms for putting its principles into practice. Yet on the other hand, one must agree with its sponsor that "if you look into it carefully enough, you will see big things indicated"—particularly an affirmation of the two basic principles of respect for human personality, and trusteeship of wealth and talents, with all that those principles imply. And, as he also pointed out, if once these principles are accepted, the onus is then on individuals, or groups arising from the conference, to see that they are worked out in a practical and Christian way.

The disappointment of a certain section of the con-



ference in the vagueness of the report resulted in an attempt to have the document referred back for redrafting. Several speakers complained about the lack of any specific statements on the relationship of Church and State, and the Church's attitude to national planning. "The liveliest and most controversial issue of our time is how much planning there should be and who should do it," said one delegate. "This conference claims to be giving some guidance on current problems, and if we fail to do so at this point, we fail at a vitally important place."

However, the conference, as a whole, upheld the view of another delegate who argued that at that late stage the task of saying anything more about the Nature of the State was quite beyond them, and that if they did embark on it they would soon lose themselves, together with their ideal of "terse Anglo-Saxon," in a maze of theological abstractions. But the protest was not wasted. As a result of it the report underwent several important changes—in particular an elaboration of the reference to planning—while the general question of Church and State will receive attention from the Continuation Committee of the conference.

As finally adopted, the report on Industry and Commerce occupies far less space than any of the other reports. Even so, it is still only possible here to give a summary of some of the main points.

Because they are a hindrance to "the full and free development of human personality" (which is one of the two foundation principles of the whole statement) bad housing conditions such as still obtain in New Zealand should not be tolerated longer than is absolutely necessary, declares the report. In order to foster a sense of vocation in employer and employee alike, an increasing emphasis must be placed on the quality, beauty, and simplicity of the goods produced. (Several speakers commented on the poor design and shoddy workmanship of many manufactured articles these days. And another said, "There's not much sense of vocation in putting crown tops on beer bottles—I know, because I've done it.") Every man should be given an effective share in the determination of the policy of his industry—**"We shall not be morally satisfied with industry until it is a conscious, informed, and intelligent co-operative undertaking for the common good."**

Because every man "is entitled to permanent employment in the work for which he is fitted and to which he is prepared to give adequate service," the conference declared its belief that employment agencies on a national scale must be set up to assist the orderly transference of labour. "All human beings have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security, and equal opportunity." Therefore the provision of an adequate standard of life for all willing to take their due share in the work of the nation should be a first charge on industry.

The report goes on: "While this conference recognises that the contributions of men to the total welfare of the community are necessarily unequal, it affirms that it is unjust to deny any man a reasonable standard of living solely on the ground of incapacity. **The conference notes that the present system tolerates inequalities so disproportionate as to shock the moral sense.**"

That it is unjust for persons doing similar work to receive dissimilar wages on the ground of race or sex, and that nobody should be debarred from entering a trade or profession by accidents of birth or wealth or any artificial barrier, are two other points made by the report.

It is recognised that "an increasing degree of planning is necessary to make the most of our resources, to eliminate waste, and to ensure a fair sharing of the end-product." Without organised co-operation there could be no hope of eliminating unemployment and war. But planning is difficult and dangerous. "The Christian Social Order must give effect to two principles and there will always be tension between them . . . The community must care for every man, and each man must take responsibility for himself and pull his weight." The report also affirms the principle that planning must respect a man's right to a voice in that planning, and to this end advocates, among other things, that authority should be decentralised by vesting proper control in community groups, "because the strength of a democracy lies in a healthy local activity."

Under the heading of "Trusteeship" appeared this statement: "The conference calls all people to realise that they are trustees of the wealth and talents which they possess; that land, money, possessions of all kinds, including physical and mental talents, must be used to the glory of God and in the service of their fellow men . . . Responsibility is the keynote of Christian society." In this connection it is noted that in New Zealand there is too much emphasis on the claiming of rights as divorced from the acceptance of responsibilities, and that no section of the community is blameless in this matter. There is also said to be a great deal of dishonesty to be seen in New Zealand in the form of slack work, sharp practices in business, deceitful advertising, petty thieving, shoddy workmanship, and the use of inferior materials.

On the subject of finance, the conference affirmed that "the power wielded by money should not be beyond democratic control," and went on to condemn all speculation in currency or in industrial shares, or any kind of financial transaction which yielded a profit without rendering commensurate service, or which endangered the rights of others. "Many accepted forms of share issue are fraudulent in effect if not in intention."



The conference supported a declaration to the effect that the experience gained by partially subordinating finance to war production, and the present experimental methods of financing public expenditure with a minimum of interest charges, should be extended to the post-war programme in those industries which are necessary for a balanced economy.

In the concluding statement of this report the Conference recognised, in humility, that "the Churches themselves fall short of the principles enunciated." It declared that "the Church is never in a position to identify itself completely with any particular political or economic programme," and urged upon all Christian people the duty of making themselves well-informed about the present situation, and about the political and economic remedies that are from time to time proposed, in order that "they may use their vote in good Christian conscience." Finally, all Christian people are called to strive passionately for "the establishment of an economic order filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ."

## THE LAND

Perhaps the most illuminating remark which I picked up in the discussion on the report of the Land panel was a statement by one of the farmer-members of the panel that it was quite impossible to produce any blue-print of solutions for the problems connected with the land—such as that of the conflict between town and country. "If you are a farmer you just have to work out these problems for yourself," he said. "It's all a matter of attitude, but believe me, if you have the right attitude they do work out."

This viewpoint was, in fact, stressed throughout the report which, while attempting some answers to certain specific problems, declared that disagreement on methods and solutions was much less important than agreement on the basic concepts. The problem of the land is the problem of the relation of all people to it (stated the report, which was presented by Mr. Brian Low). "All of us live directly from the products of the land and the land must, therefore, serve all men, both now and in the future. All people have an obligation to see that the land is not misused and that those who make their living from it directly can do so without abusing it." If the land does not fully serve mankind it is because, among other reasons, many people are too poor to buy enough of its vital products; because some land is inefficiently farmed and because in other cases financial pressure caused by changing prices, high land values, uneconomic units, or lack of capital may have compelled abuse of the land (though this does not justify such abuse); and because of soil erosion, and deterioration as a result of the fertility being "mined" out of the land by over-driving and poor management. In this con-

nection the report said: "... On millions of acres of the poorer and steeper land the farmer may be quite unable to solve **alone** the problem that justifiable ignorance may have begun and that financial commitments may have continued." And again: "The permanent destruction of fertile soil in order to win gold, which is of small real value, stands condemned by all thinking people."

Pointing out that less than one quarter of all New Zealanders are farmers and that the proportion tends to decrease, the report declared that industry should use the freedom given by electric power and better transport to operate in more spacious rural surroundings, thereby doing something to give both town and country dwellers the advantages of both ways of life.

After analysing in detail the lack of understanding and lack of co-operation between farmers and the rest of the community, the report affirmed that "both town and country must learn the truth that they depend on one another." Though some of the differences are genuine and creative differences, others are false and based on ignorance. "The Christian attitude can provide the solution of this problem because it includes both understanding and goodwill. The healing of this breach needs the best efforts of the Church and of all men of goodwill."

The report went on to examine carefully what should be done to improve conditions for farm workers (for whom there is a special need for fair wages and good housing); for farm women ("The greatest chance for spiritual, mental, and physical health is in their hands, but perhaps the greatest reason why that maximum is often not reached is that many country women are overworked and have too little energy for creative, stimulating living in their homes and in their community"); for children in the country ("Country people still face many disadvantages in the education of their children. This is one of the most important contributing causes in driving people off the land"); and for the farmer himself ("He is one of the greatest sufferers from the instability of the economic system").

On the vexed question of land tenure, the report said: "We recognise the considerable value of the farmer's sense of ownership in his land, but declare that it is not a freedom to do as he likes. . . . The claim of the State to take action can only be repelled by the farmers who personally and in their own organisations themselves make known the standards of good land use and insist on all farmers doing better than any conceivable State-imposed minimum standard."

Arising from this, the question of nationalisation was discussed, the general argument being that, from the point of view of the reasonable provision of capital, the nationalisation and leasing of at least some of the land has something to



commend it, but that there are certain dangers, and without adequate safeguards against them, a system of leasehold tenure might not succeed.

In the discussion on this section, a speaker wanted to know if something could not be done to form rural communities—residential centres from which people would go out to work in the fields. “We have talked about the planning and planting of industry: we should also think about this other aspect,” he said. “It is done in China.” (A voice: “And in Russia!”)

However, the convener of the Land panel replied that, from inquiries he had made in a good many places, he had come to the conclusion that there was as yet not much desire for collective farming in New Zealand, and so the proposal was not really feasible.

If I seem to have picked on this point and given it special mention it is not because it was the only subject discussed, or necessarily the most important one either, but because it seems to me to provide the keynote of the Conference’s approach not only to this problem of the land but also to most of the other problems that came before it. That is to say, delegates took the view that, while the Christian attitude is essential to solve all these problems, they must be tackled intelligently and realistically, without sentimentality and emotionalism. As one speaker put it: “Time and again we find that what we are advocating is good commonsense as well as what we believe God wants, and so we can support it on both grounds.”

## *NEW ZEALAND AND THE PACIFIC*

When the Conference came to consider the report on “Christian Order and New Zealand in Relation to World Community” it discovered, with some relief, that, though still an impressive document, this report was only about one-third its original size, having been subjected to a “process of dehydration” by the section of the Conference to which it had been entrusted. Mostly, the report dealt with New Zealand’s status and responsibility as a Pacific power, with particular reference to the islands of the Pacific; and there was some disappointment (again, however, not unmixed with relief) at the announcement that the drafters of it had felt themselves to lack the necessary knowledge (not to mention the necessary time) to include sections dealing with China, Japan, India, and Russia.

After a preamble to the effect that, from the Christian viewpoint, the Church must be regarded as potentially the chief instrument of world order, the report launched into a fairly lengthy and rather theological examination of the Nature of Community, concluding with the statement that

there is a great field in New Zealand for the development of a sense of world community. It then, so to speak, got down to cases and expressed convictions on certain problems arising from New Zealand's relation to the islands of the Pacific.

On the subject of administration, for instance, the Conference welcomed the declaration of the Canberra Pact that "the doctrine of trusteeship . . . is applicable in broad principle to all colonial territories in the Pacific and elsewhere, and that the main purpose of the trust is the welfare of the native peoples and their social, economic and political development." But while doing so, the Conference expressed the view that the principle of "trusteeship" must shade off into the more adequate principle of "guardianship," with the clear understanding, however, that even this should be limited in duration and that the goal must be the self-government of the peoples concerned. "Although the position varies in different parts of the Pacific (the report stated), it may truthfully be said that little important responsibility has been surrendered to the natives. . . . There should be increasing opportunities given to the natives to take positions of leadership and to participate in government." The report went on to urge that, in the light of this purpose, candidates for the Colonial Government Service should be most carefully selected and trained; and in this direction one valuable contribution by the Church must be "to encourage her young people to find their vocation in rendering fully-qualified service in this sphere."

Towards the system of condominium the report was critical, stating that, with the experience of the New Hebrides as a guide, "we strongly urge that joint control of any island group be avoided, as having proved itself a most unsatisfactory form of government." And when any question of transfer of colonies or dependencies arose, the governing principle ought to be the interests and—insofar as it could be ascertained by impartial inquiry—the will of the population affected by the change.

The report rejected the theory ("expounded with the best of intentions") that the Islands should be shut off from all "white" intercourse. "God has set them in the world; they are part of it and must share in its give and take, its adventures and glories, as well as its retreats and failures."

Concerning education, a fundamental principle to be observed was that it was better to be a true Islander than an imitation European. With a few exceptions of recent date, said the report, education in the South Pacific had been carried out entirely by Christian missions and, contrary to the statements of "casual and superficial critics," the opinion of those who knew all the facts was that the results had been very remarkable, especially considering the difficulties. "It may be assumed with reasonable confidence that in New Guinea, New Hebrides, Papua, the Solomons, and the Gilbert and Ellice Groups, the missions will, for a long time to come, conduct the



schools and play an important part in shaping their policy. In Tonga, Fiji, and Samoa, where Government education departments are in the making, the co-operation and goodwill of the missions will still be essential to success and the best interests of the natives." Similarly with the medical service in the Pacific: the report emphasised the importance of expanding the valuable work already being done of training native medical practitioners and assistants. "This development of a native ministry of healing is one of the greatest and most hopeful achievements of medical service in the South Pacific. It is being gradually extended to include native nurses and child welfare workers. . . . We are strongly of the opinion that it would be a definitely retrograde step and a dereliction of duty on the part of Christian missions to withdraw from medical service. The friendly collaboration with the Government that has existed in the past should be extended in a comprehensive medical system that will reach every needy native."

The most hotly debated of all the topics in this report was that of indentured labour, the argument in plenary session of the Conference lasting almost all one evening. It was significant that, in general, those delegates who defended the system of indentured labour—with reservations, of course—were those who had had long experience of missionary work in the islands. As a direct result, no sweeping condemnation of the system emerged from the Conference, the finding on this point reading as follows: "The Conference looks forward to the time when within native communities where the indenture system operates there will arise an ability to negotiate, and collective bargaining will render the system of indenture unnecessary."

## WORLD PEACE

As had been the experience in the debate on agriculture, realism rather than sentiment marked the Conference's approach to its task of issuing a pronouncement on "Christian principles in the making of peace." The treatment of war criminals provoked a particularly lively discussion in which it became clear that, on a matter like this, delegates were much less sure of what the Christian attitude should be than they were when dealing with most other topics. Indeed, consideration of the report had not gone far when it was seen that the Conference had split itself into two camps—those who stood by absolute principle in all circumstances, and those who argued that this was often impractical and that sometimes there had to be concessions to expediency. Those delegates who had the job of drafting and presenting the report acknowledged frankly that this conflict did exist, in the form of a "serious cleavage" between two major points of view concerning the **immediate** application of principles on which the

vast majority of Christians were agreed. These principles were summed up in the fundamental belief that only the Christian spirit, especially as it expresses itself in friendship and service, can conquer evil, and that an enduring peace can be based only on righteousness.

This cleavage between what may be called the short-term and the long-term points of view was explicitly illustrated when the Section committee, by a majority vote, decided to substitute the words "are right" for the words "may be the best possible" in the following paragraph from the report as presented: "While convinced that no lasting peace can be secured except upon the foundation of such convictions as are stated here, this group believes that certain practical actions which suggest something less than, or even seem contrary to, these convictions, **may be the best possible**, in the circumstances. Such actions must, however, have as their objective the changing of the circumstances so that complete obedience to these convictions shall become possible." But when the report came before the plenary session it was decided to retain the original words "may be the best possible," in lieu of "are right."

On this point it is worth mentioning the case of a young returned soldier at the Conference who undoubtedly expressed the viewpoint of the majority of delegates when he said that he had volunteered because in the circumstances there had seemed nothing else worthwhile to do but fight, but this did not mean that he thought war was right; as a Christian he believed then, and he still believed, that war was wrong. But this same young soldier probably also spoke for most of those present when he expressed strong support for a reference in the report to conscientious objectors, and declared that "many young men returned from this war hold views on conscientious objectors very different from the opinions of organisations of returned servicemen of former wars."

Specifically, the statement about C.O.'s which received the endorsement of Conference read as follows: "There must be respect for and tolerance of those who, in genuine obedience to conscience, are led into attitudes which are not shared by the majority, and no disabilities which are not shared by all members of the community should be imposed on them on this account." Under the same heading of "Minorities," the Conference also endorsed this statement: "Social, economic, or personal discrimination against aliens (as such) in New Zealand should be recognised as a denial of the Christian spirit. That spirit demands, instead, that as generous treatment as possible should be given to them, including the speedy naturalisation of those desiring citizenship where their credentials prove to be satisfactory."

There was virtually no conflict of opinion on these points: where the major clash occurred was, as I have already indicated, over the subject of war criminals, and also over an



amendment to substitute the word "false" for the word "easy" in a statement to the effect that peril was involved in "the easy assumption that it is only the defeated nations that have violated the law." This amendment was defeated and the word "easy" left standing, but not until the use of the atomic bomb had come in for a certain amount of critical comment from a small section of delegates. A mild flutter was also caused by the delegate who asserted that "too much poppy-cock" was often talked about the Christian spirit and about friendship and service, for there was such a thing as the friendship and service of pure expediency.

As for war criminals: there was, for example, the delegate who pointed out the dangers inherent in the easy and fallacious idea that by destroying certain men and their armies we could destroy the ideas which had brought war on the world ("We Christians, better than anybody, should realise the impossibility of destroying an idea by force.") Then there was the delegate who declared, "We must reject the pious and unrealistic assumption that we can put men to death and leave it to God to redeem them. We know that the community is going to punish war criminals, but we as the Church must also assert that no nation is beyond the possibility of being restored to wholesome citizenship among the nations, and that no man, even a war criminal, is beyond the possibility of redemption."

And that, in effect, was the view finally endorsed by Conference, with an additional declaration concerning the spirit in which punishment should be carried out: "This responsibility must be exercised with humility, and punishment administered 'with fear and trembling' . . . The desire to take vengeance on those who are judged to be primarily responsible for the sufferings caused by war may be readily understood, but it must be resisted."

Notwithstanding the differences which this session of the Conference brought to light, there was a substantial amount of agreement, the report being finally adopted with comparatively few changes, and these did not materially affect its message.

# SUMMING UP

"Yes, but what did you do apart from talking and passing resolutions: what did the Conference really accomplish?" That is the question a dozen or so persons have already asked me since my return. It is a natural question, but unfortunately it is an almost impossible one to answer in the way that people would like it answered; that is, by citing concrete results. This is true not only of this Conference but of nearly every conference that has ever been held. We can no more be sure that, as a direct result of "Christchurch, 1945," New Zealanders will now behave like true Christians in all their dealings, than we can be sure that the mere holding of the San Francisco Conference guarantees world peace for ever, because in all such cases, and particularly in a country which relies on democratic procedure, the answer to the question, "But what did you accomplish?" depends ultimately on the attitude of the persons asking the question.

It may be that those speakers will prove to have been right who asserted that this was a momentous gathering which will alter the spiritual climate of this country for years to come; or it may turn out to have been "just another conference," with nothing to show for all the thinking and talking that was done there except several hundred pages of reports and a collection of pious resolutions which will be forgotten in a few months' time. It must be left to history to decide whether "Christchurch, 1945" really was historic; those who took part are still much too close to the event to have brought it into true perspective. Yet it can at least be said that nobody there was under any illusions about reports and resolutions being in themselves sufficient to work miracles.

In this respect the mood of the Conference was thoroughly realistic: there was no attempt to side-step the fact that convinced Christians are today everywhere in a minority, however much the majority of our people may pay lip-service to religion. Nobody rose up to contradict the delegate who declared that although 90 per cent of New Zealanders call themselves Christians, attaching themselves to one or other of the denominations when they fill in their census-papers—and would, indeed, protest violently if they were described as pagans—yet when it comes to an important issue, anybody who stands up at a Chamber of Commerce meeting or in a trade union and suggests that a Christian principle is at stake is looked on by most of his fellows as a mildly exotic sort of crank.

Nobody rose up to contradict that delegate because, for one thing, his statement was true, and because, for another, it was of course for the express purpose of encouraging that sort of "crankiness" that the Conference was being held. Its



main task was to declare the manner in which the Christian ethic should be applied to those very issues with which Chambers of Commerce, trade unions, and similar bodies are most commonly concerned.

At the same time, anybody who reads the reports of Conference hoping to find therein cut-and-dried solutions to any of these problems is probably due for disappointment. A gathering of this nature does not produce architect's plans for building a brave new world on the spot: the most it can do is to supply sailing-orders for the first stage of the journey to the site where it is hoped the brave new world will be built. And even the sailing orders which the Conference did produce were perhaps not as explicit as some might have hoped, for it must be remembered that they had to be drawn up to suit eight different crews—the eight denominations comprising the National Council of Churches. I make no apology for repeating that the fellowship and concord demonstrated at the Conference, the willingness of sincere Christians to forget their ancient sectarian differences for the common good, were the most important and most inspiring features of the whole assembly. At the same time it must not be overlooked that the issues on which the delegates to this Conference have so signally demonstrated their unanimity were issues which have commonly been regarded as lying largely outside the realm of theology, and that the crucial test of the ecumenical movement in New Zealand will come two years from now at the Conference on "Faith and Order," when the Churches will have to look **inside themselves** to find the true extent of their agreement.

There is, however, no reason to suppose that the Churches will fail to meet that test. On the contrary, though the mood of the Christchurch Conference was thoroughly realistic, the delegates did not meet, and certainly did not part, in any atmosphere of despair and frustration. Indeed, it was precisely because they felt the final message of the Conference, as presented, to be lacking a note of high resolve and courageous confidence, that they sent the document back to be recast. (As approved, it appears at the end of this booklet.)

## ONLY A BEGINNING

Yet when all this is said, "Christchurch, 1945" was only a beginning, though a magnificent beginning. Its real work began when the delegates went back to their homes and parishes, their shops, offices, and factories. Its enthusiasm and purpose lives on in the National Council of Churches, in the Continuation Committee of the Conference that has been appointed, and in a movement known as the "Christian Frontier" which, working unofficially, will seek every opportunity to apply the decisions of the Conference in every

section of public life. ("I regard these bodies—the Continuation Committee and the 'Christian Frontier' Movement—as representing what you might call the Rump Parliament of Christchurch," said the Bishop of Wellington in supporting their formation. "There is, for one thing, a good old Anglo-Saxon meaty flavour about the word 'rump.' And a rump is also very convenient to smack if anything is done of which we disapprove!")

In the words of Cromwell before Dunbar, "We are on an engagement very difficult." But the Conference has, so to speak, put the people of New Zealand on the spot: if they are sincere in calling this a Christian country which, as they have frequently claimed, has been fighting a war in defence of a civilisation based on the Christian ethic, then they must now demonstrate their sincerity. Many persons will talk sceptically, if not cynically, about the practical value of the Conference at Christchurch, yet only those who are avowed atheists and rationalists are genuinely entitled to talk like that. The organisation of the Churches is there to give help and guidance to the community—if the community wants to be helped and guided—but it now depends on all the people of New Zealand who call themselves Christian, rather than on the Churches, whether the high hopes which the Conference has generated are justified: on them rests the vital responsibility of translating words into deeds; of proving whether, in fact, their profession of Christianity does mean something or is no more than hypocrisy. The public will be under a dangerous illusion if it expects to see hopes turned into achievements by any will and by any effort but its own, or by any method except the full application of Christianity to daily life.



## THE MESSAGE OF THE CONFERENCE TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES OF NEW ZEALAND

*In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the members of the Conference on Christian Order, assembled at Christ's College, Christchurch, from August 28 to September 4, 1945, greet you.*

*We have met together during eight busy and happy days of Conference, and, seeking the help of God, have faced up to some of the bewildering problems which Church, State, and Community have to meet, not only in New Zealand, but also in the world at large. The end of the war only accentuates those problems.*

*At the close of our gathering we desire to record our great thankfulness to God for the sheer joy of our fellowship, for a deep sense of unity in diversity, for a growing sense of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and for a wonderful measure of agreement.*

*Maori and Pakeha, we discussed the future relations of the two races, in friendship and confidence, and it is our hope that our resolutions point to a way in which the gifts and culture of both races may contribute to the future happiness and prosperity of our country.*

*We have affirmed our belief that the good news of the love of God in Christ is primarily a message to the individual in the fellowship of the family of God. But we are sure that the gospel has also a message, and an urgent message, for all human relationships.*

*In our discussions on Education, on Industry and Commerce, on the Land and on Community, we have found ourselves of one mind in asserting that all these problems are human problems, and therefore first of all, spiritual problems. To approach them from the material angle is to invite frustration and disappointment.*

*We see no hope for such a spiritual approach except by a widespread return to faith in the sovereignty and Fatherhood of the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing but the recognition of our privilege as sons of our Father in heaven can guarantee us the human liberties and privileges for which our sons and brothers have been fighting, and prevent us from losing our God-given individuality.*

*As our thoughts ranged to regions beyond our own shores, while not unmindful of our duties to the larger Pacific area or to the other members of that world fellowship of nations for which we are looking, we were impressed by the obligation under which New Zealand lies to regard itself as an integral part of the South Pacific world, and to render service thereto.*

*We are well aware that our conclusions and resolutions have only the authority of the members of our Conference, and not of the National Council or of the Churches. But we commend them most earnestly to the consideration of all Christian people and to all men and women of goodwill. We humbly believe that these resolutions point to real and practicable lines of advance. If the Christian people of New Zealand approve them, there lies on them the responsibility of turning words into deeds. If words are not turned into deeds, our Conference will have failed in its object.*

*So far as lies in our power, we have tried to ensure that the work of the Conference shall not end with the Conference. We have looked to the future and have appointed a Continuation Committee. A group of persons in the Conference have also initiated a movement called the "Christian Frontier" which will apply its energies to the making of Christian contacts with every department of our public, social, and industrial life.*

*We affirm as did the Oxford Conference of 1937:—*

*"The first duty of the Church and its greatest service to the world is that it be in very deed the Church, confessing the true faith, committed to the fulfilment of the Will of Christ its only Lord, and united in Him in a fellowship of Love and Service."*

